SERMON

PREACHED AT THE RE-OPENING OF ST. ANDREW'S CHURCH, NEW WESTMINSTER, SABBATH, OCT. 13, 1878,

BY THE

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ST. ANDREW'S CONGREGATION was organized in March, 1862, by the Rev. R. Jamieson, Missionary of the Canada Presbyterian Church. The church was erected at a cost of upwards of four thousand dollars, and was dedicated to the worship of God on the 20th of December, 1863. The repairs and additions just completed cost over one thousand dollars.

How amiable are thy tabernacles, O Lord of hosts! My soul longeth, yea, even fainteth for the courts of the Lord: my heart and my flesh crieth out for the living God.

PSALM LXXXIV. 1, 2.

It is difficult to say which is more worthy of admiration—the profound piety or the lofty poetry of this Psalm. Whoever the author of it may have been, it is at all events evident that this sacred song was composed by one whose soul found its true rest and highest joy in communion with God and His people, who loved the courts of God's house with an earnest and ardent affection, and who, at the time when the Psalm was composed, was prevented from satisfying his longing soul through being unable to appear before God in Zion. Contemplating a privilege of which he could no longer avail himself, and thinking of the people pressing onwards to appear before God in Zion, while he could not join any of the moving companies as they went forward "from strength to strength," he gave vent to the emotions of his soul in the words before us:—"How amiable are thy tabernacles, O Lord of hosts! My soul longeth, yea, even fainteth for the courts of the Lord: my heart and my flesh crieth out for the living God." He envied even the very sparrows that flitted and chirped about the temple; and the swallows that darted around Zion and built their nests and laid their young, were to him objects of envy,—"Yea, the sparrow hath found an house, and the swallow a nest for herself, where she may lay her young, even thine altars, O Lord of hosts, my King and my God." And then he proceeds to express his estimate of the privilege of constant attendance upon

the worship of God. "Blessed," he says, "are they that dwell in thy house; they will be still praising thee." Yea, further: "A day in thy courts is better than a thousand" spent elsewhere. "I had rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God," or, as the Hebrew has it, "I would choose rather to sit at the threshold of the house of my God, than to dwell in the tents of wickedness." Like St. John on the lonely Isle of Patmos, the Psalmist longs for the worship of God and for communion with God's people. Or like many a Christian emigrant who leaves behind him a land of Sabbaths and sanctuaries, and finds a new home far from the means of grace, he thinks with regret of lost privileges and of opportunities of worship once enjoyed, but now beyond his reach. In every age, religious experience is very much the same. The soul that loves God delights in his worship and service, and has ever done so in every land, and now as ever appropriates to itself the language of the Psalmist, "How amiable are thy tabernacles, O Lord of hosts! My soul longeth, yea, even fainteth for the courts of the Lord: my heart and my flesh crieth out for the living God."

Is all this devotion to the worship and service of God reasonable and right, or is it not? Why should we concern ourselves with the public worship of God: be zealous in the erection of churches and in sustaining the means of grace? Or in other words, why should we reasonably be expected reverently to worship God, and earnestly to work in extending the Redeemer's Kingdom?

And let us ask, first of all, Why do men worship? We answer, first, Because the instinct to worship is one of the deepest and strongest instincts of human nature. Mankind have worshipped under one form or another at all times and in every place. Whether the object of worship be worthy the adoration of the human soul or not, the fact of worship cannot be disputed. The object of man's worship may be sufficiently degraded or mean: the rudely carved block which the savage calls his god, and worships; some object in nature, great or small—the sun that warms

the earth, or the reptile that crawls upon it; the Jupiter of the Romans, or the Jehovah of Jew or Christian: but through all these changes, the fact of worship remains the same. For let it be remembered that the Word of God does not originate the fact of worship—for prior to revelation the instinct existed—and that it reveals itself in lands where the light of revelation never shone. Consequently, we may safely affirm that it is natural for man to worship; nay further, that the man who does not worship does violence to his own nature. For how otherwise than by believing worship to be an instinct of our nature, and religion in one form or another a necessity of our being, can we possibly account for the self-sacrificing rites of heathendom; the erection of gorgeous temples, so costly and entailing so much expense and labour; the self-torture of the ascetic, and the self-abnegation of the heathen devotee, that in the intensity of devotion may well cause our languid, nominal Christianity to blush for shame?

But secondly, We worship God because he expressly claims and demands our worship.

While it is true that the Word of God does not create the tendency to worship, it is nevertheless equally true that without the Word of God our worship at best would be but a groping in the dark after a Being whom we could not really discover. Like children in the night, eagerly searching for a lost father, without a guide to lead them to his feet: like mariners on a dark tempestuous sea, seeking a harbour of safety and rest, but without chart or compass to guide them thither, we might wander on through life and still find him not. But to direct us in our perplexity, the Divine Word of Revelation comes to our aid. A voice startles the silence, and we recognise it as the voice of our Father. It proclaims in thrilling accents, "I am the Lord thy God: thou shalt have no other gods before me." And to the anxiously seeking soul it says, "I am thy friend." To the tempest-tossed on life's troubled sea it declares, "I am the the only haven of safety, and the true harbour of rest." And surely, in the full light of revealed truth,

the worship of Almighty God appears wholly reasonable and right. Is he not our Creator? and well, surely, may we worship him; He is our Lord, and has a great claim upon all our services; He is our Father, and deserves our best love. How much, too, ought such a revelation to elevate and stimulate our worship! It presents for our adoration a Being of infinite perfections, "glorious in His holiness and fearful in His praises." His "throne is in the Heavens, and his Kingdom ruleth over all." "In Him we live, and move, and have our being." Our lives are His. Every breath we draw; every time the pulse throbs, and the heart beats, we are wholly indebted to His sustaining goodness; and what more reasonable than that we should worship Him with reverential fear? But this is by no means all. This glorious Being is also our compassionate and most merciful Redeemer. We have sinned against Him most grievously, but yet he loves us; hates our sins, but loves us. We sold ourselves into the most degrading bondage, but in His wondrous mercy, He brought us back and paid the full ransom of our liberty:—but why should we enlarge? Can words more touchingly or fully describe God's wonderful work of grace on our behalf, than the sublimely simple words of St. John: "God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life"? In view of all this, truly, well may we exclaim, Oh the breadth, and length, and depth, and height of the love of God, surely it passeth knowledge! Who would not worship a Being so great, so glorious, and so merciful as the God of Salvation? for surely His worship and the extension of His Kingdom are our most reasonable service.

But thirdly, We worship God and seek to advance His Kingdom, because we know that by so doing we endeavour to fulfil the chief end of our being, and so secure the purest joys and the greatest happiness in this life, as well as in the life to come. For why has God made us, and endowed us with all the faculties which we possess; granted us all our opportunities for doing good;

given us reason and revelation; sent his Son to teach us and to lay down His life in our behalf? Was it simply to eat and to drink, or at best merely to busy ourselves with the passing things of the present hour: to be wholly engrossed with the affairs of this world for a few fleeting years and then to be no more; to wind up our little lives with the long sleep of death, and to pass out from being as the foam-bell bursts and fades from the river, or as the cloud-rack melts from the summer skies? Or must we move a step higher to find out the great end and object of our being? Simply one step higher, but no further? In other words, is the chief end of man simply to grow rich: purely to make money: to coin heart and brain into silver and gold, and at last to die wealthy, although we know that we have heaped up wealth by constantly shutting ear and eye against all the most sacred claims of duty and of God? If so, then alas! the best and loftiest aspirations of our souls are but a delusive mockery and human life is a sad and dismal failure. For to the many this wealth never comes. It is a phantom ever pursued but never grasped; and even to the few who secure it, the highest joy or greatest pleasure comes not with it. For, account for the fact as you may, there is beyond all doubt a yearning in man's soul that money cannot satiate: a hunger which gold can never appease, and a void which remains unfilled until you give him some thing greater than all the material wealth in the world.

But let us mount another step upwards, and upon that higher platform let us ask "Is this the true sphere of man's noblest ambition; is this the highest point to which he can attain, and the best and most satisfying pursuit in which it is possible for him to take an interest?" On this loftier eminence he casts aside sluggish ease, and even the sordid and all engrossing pursuit of money, and his soul is fired with the glowing dreams of ambition. Now the object of pursuit is neither ease nor wealth, but fame or distinction. To this all other pursuits are subordinate. He now thirsts for social distinction, or longs for political

honour, and thinks no exertion too great in order to secure it, believing as he does that in doing so he secures the highest good of which his nature is capable. But then, after all has been secured, does he not find that the deeper wants of his nature are still unsatisfied, and that rest comes not with distinction, nor peace with the possession of power? For, just as the magnetic needle quivers and trembles and oscillates to the pole (turn your compass as you may) and rests only when it points to the north, so the human soul, in spite of everything that would turn it away from Him, can find its true rest only in God himself. But once it rests in Him, the cry of helplessness "Who shall shew us any good?" no longer arises. Finding Him it finds its true and permanent portion, and rising upwards on the wings of faith and of love exclaims, "Whom have I in heaven but thee, and there is none upon earth that I desire beside thee. My heart and my flesh faileth, but God is the strength of my heart and my portion for ever." And longing for more constant communion with Him, it exclaims, "How amiable are thy tabernacles, O Lord of hosts! My soul longeth, yea, even fainteth for the courts of the Lord: my heart and my flesh crieth out for the living God."

But fourthly, We love the courts of God's house, and the ordinances of religion, because we love our country, and because we know that the Christian religion is fraught with blessing to every land in which it is established.

Every man who loves his country and desires to further its welfare, must love the Gospel of the grace of God, and seek the extension of the Redeemer's Kingdom. For it is still as true as of old that "righteousness exalteth a nation," and that "sin is a reproach to any people." The Gospel of Jesus Christ inculcates true godliness, but godliness, we are assured, is "profitable for all things, having the promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come." Wherever it is received and obeyed, blessings descend in rich effusion--blessings temporal as well as spiritual. The worship of Almighty God, and a

belief in the precepts and the promises of the Gospel, give dignity and strength to human character, and fit men for the proper discharge of the ordinary duties of life. The Christian religion is the friend of true progress and of national prosperity and peace. It is the friend of virtue, and the foe of vice. It fosters industry, and condemns sloth. It teaches the drunkard, sobriety; the immoral, purity; and the indolent, diligence in business. It teaches the spendthrift to use his means as one that must give an account, so that he cannot any longer squander his wealth in folly; and the miser, that he is responsible to God for his wealth, so that he may no longer withhold his hand from helping forward that which is good. It condemns revenge, malice, envy, anger, backbiting, slander, and all the dark brood of evil passions and feelings that embitter human life and destroy the peace of human society, and in their room it plants the peaceable fruits of righteousness. It were indeed easy to point out the temporal blessings conferred upon nations by the elevating power of the Gospel. Lands of bibles, of Sabbaths, of sanctuaries; lands where God is worshipped, His day hallowed, His commands obeyed, and His truth loved: such are the lands where there is true peace and national glory. And do we love our adopted country, and shall we not zealously strive for the propagation of the truth as it is in Jesus? Surely, in view of all that the Gospel of Jesus is calculated to effect, every thoughtful patriot may well join in the exclamation of the Psalmist, "How amiable are thy tabernacles, O Lord of hosts! My soul longeth, yea, even fainteth for the courts of the Lord: my heart and my flesh crieth out for the living God."

And now let us sum up in a few words what we have found as incentives for the worship of God, and for zeal in the cause of religion. We have noticed:

First, That worship is an instinct of our nature, and that from the very constitution of our being we are called upon to take an interest in the things of religion and of God.

Secondly, That worship is enjoined in the Word of God

and enforced by every consideration that should lead us to lives of devotion, and that as Christians we are called upon to interest ourselves in this matter.

Thirdly, That our true peace and comfort make the religion of Jesus a necessity, and the means of grace an unspeakable blessing, and that consequently we ought to devote ourselves to uphold and sustain God's worship; and

Fourthly, That the present and future prosperity of our country is to a great extent bound up with the maintenance and dissemination of the principles of the Gospel and that as patriots we are called upon to do all that we can to maintain and extend the Redeemer's Kingdom in this land.

And surely, brethren, if zeal in any cause be reasonable, in such a cause as this it is absolutely right. The apostle Paul assures us that "it is good to be zealously affected always in a good thing," and have we not here something to call forth all our energies, and which is absolutely good? Do we admire the zeal of the man of business who strives by all lawful and honorable means to promote his wordly interests, and extend his business? Do we admire the zeal of the politician who firmly believes in the rectitude and wisdom of his principles, and strives diligently to establish them? or of the man of science who believes in the deep importance of solving certain problems, and expounding nature's laws; and shall we not rather admire and strive to copy the zeal of the Psalmist when he says, "How amiable are thy tabernacles, O Lord of hosts! My soul longeth, yea, even fainteth for the courts of the Lord: my heart and my flesh crieth out for the living God."

And now, in conclusion, let me offer to you a word of congratulation on the proofs of this zeal which the improved appearance of your place of worship this day presents. I need not enter into the details of the change effected, nor of the labor and expense attending such extensive improvements. The history of the church itself is interesting, and it is specially interesting to find that the zeal which led to its erection in the first instance has in no

way abated. About fifteen years ago, your church was originally built, and it is consequently the second Presbyterian Church erected in British Columbia and the oldest in connection with our Presbytery. Fifteen years is but a short period in the history of our older churches in other lands, but in this new Province, fifteen years covers the greater portion of the settled period of the country. Nor have these years been uneventful or free from change. It will occur to some of you how not a few of those who rejoiced over the original erection of this building, and helped forward the work, have since been called to their rest and reward. Others again have left the city to find homes for themselves in other parts of the Province, or even in other lands; but their places have been filled up by other worshippers, who still put their hands to the work of rebuilding and beautifying the temple. And it is interesting, and a great cause for gratitude, to remember that, as the church was commenced under the ministry of your present pastor, so also, in the good providence of God, the present improvements have been effected under his ministry. Called away from you for a time to another part of the Province, and carrying thither the same zeal for the cause of his Master, he was instrumental in having another church erected, in which the services of God are still held. I need not remind you that during these years the city has improved in many ways, and surely it is but right and proper that your church should experience the benefit of the change, and move forward in the march of progress. It is not my intention to enter minutely into the history of this church, or of the church generally throughout the country, but to content myself with the remark that the history of the church has been singularly characteristic of that of the Province—a history of an ebbing and flowing population—of hope for the future, but of hope not yet fully realized. But, brethren, while it is still with us, as it is with the sister churches of this land, "the day of small things," let us not despise the nature of our work, nor underestimate the importance of our mission. Nay,

let us pray God to help us still to labor zealously for the future, to do our work wisely and well, and then to leave results in the hands of the Church's great King and Head. We have at all events been enabled to lay the foundation upon which those who succeed us may build. We have been privileged to sow the seed, and rejoice to think that sooner or later the harvest shall be sure. It has been ours to plant the Acorn where one day shall spring the tall and stately Oak: and may God shield it in His mercy, and protect it by His might! Very dear to us is the cause in which we are engaged, as we labor to extend the church of our forefathers in this Western World. For around our church to us most sacred memories cling and cluster--memories of home and of kindred; of the living and the dead. It is to us hallowed by the blood of Martyrs and by the lives of Saints, for "it is she that looketh forth as the morning, fair as the moon, clear as the sun, and terrible as an army with banners." Beneath her old flag have been fought the battles of religious liberty: battles in which our forefathers conquered, and transmitted to us the results of their victories. May we be found true to our trust, and worthy sons and daughters of our worthy sires! Let it be the motto of our lives:

"If I forget thee, O Jerusalem, let my right hand forget her cunning.

"If I do not remember thee, let my tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth; if I prefer not Jerusalem above my chief joy."

"Pray for the peace of Jerusalem: they shall prosper that love thee.

"Peace be within thy walls, and prosperity within thy palaces.

"For my brethren and companions' sakes, I will now say, Peace be within thee.

"Because of the house of the Lord our God I will seek thy good." Amen.